

Assembly Bill No. 1509

CHAPTER 647

An act to add Section 90 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

[Approved by Governor September 27, 2014. Filed with
Secretary of State September 27, 2014.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1509, Fox. Veterans: transition assistance.

Existing law establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is responsible for administering various programs and services for the benefit of veterans.

This bill would require, by July 1, 2015, the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a transition assistance program for veterans who have been discharged from the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard of any state, as specified. The bill would require the program to include certain California-specific transition assistance information.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) California veterans should receive ample information and resources to assist their transition into civilian life. Though California is home to nearly 1.9 million veterans, California veterans utilize fewer benefits than their peers at the national level. Further, 50 percent of post-9/11 veterans experience difficulty transitioning to civilian life and are experiencing higher rates of disabilities than previous generations of veterans. Young post-9/11 veterans also experience higher unemployment rates than their civilian counterparts.

(b) The federal Transition Goals, Plans and Success (TGPS) program, formerly known as the Transition Assistance Program, was created in 1990 to inform and assist veterans in understanding their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. However, TGPS workshops provide information specific to the state where a veteran is immediately ending his or her service and not to the location of permanent residence. Veterans who were planning to move to California after their service do not receive information about how to best coordinate their VA benefits with existing California benefits. A California-specific transition assistance program would ensure that all veterans residing in California receive the resources and information they need to successfully transition into civilian life.

(c) It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Veterans Affairs utilize its existing personnel and other resources, including its existing CalVet Internet Web site, to disseminate California-specific transition assistance information developed pursuant to Section 90 of the Military and Veterans Code, as added by Section 2 of this act. It is also the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Veterans Affairs utilize the work and research produced by the California Interagency Council on Veterans Employment CAL TAP Sub-Workgroup.

SEC. 2. Section 90 is added to the Military and Veterans Code, to read:

90. By July 1, 2015, the department shall develop a transition assistance program for veterans who have been discharged from the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard of any state. The program shall be designed to assist veterans in successfully transitioning from military to civilian life in California and to complement the transition program offered by the United States Department of Defense. The program shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following California-specific transition assistance information: higher education benefits and program information, vocational training assistance, small business resources and information, health care programs and services, mental health resources and information, military sexual trauma (MST) resources and information, and housing information.